

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit today announced its plan to return the court's operations to its New Orleans headquarters. The court has operated since Hurricane Katrina from the Bob Casey United States Courthouse in Houston, Texas. The return plan contemplates shutting down the Houston operations at close of business on Friday, December 16, 2005 and reopening for business at the John Minor Wisdom Court of Appeals Building in New Orleans on Monday, January 9, 2006. Emergency matters will continue to be accepted for filing during the period of shutdown in accordance with the court's order posted at [www.ca5.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca5.uscourts.gov).

The Fifth Circuit, the second largest in size of the twelve regional federal courts of appeals, docketed 9646 appeals in the court year ended June 30, 2005. The court's headquarters are in the John Minor Wisdom Court of Appeals Building in New Orleans, which sustained only modest damage from the devastating strike of Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. For continuity of operations, and to ensure the safety and security of court employees and court records, it was necessary to move the court's operations away from New Orleans immediately following the storm.

The federal courts' presence in New Orleans actually predates the Act of 1891 which established the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals in the country's modern three-tiered federal court structure. From 1891 until 1915, the

United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit was housed in the historic Customs House on Canal Street. The circuit court moved into its current facilities in 1915, remaining there continuously except for a hiatus from 1963 until 1971 while the Wisdom Building underwent renovation.

Five major hurricanes have struck the Wisdom Building during its history, the unnamed storms of 1915 and 1947, Betsy in 1965, Camille in 1969, and Katrina in 2005. Even with the massive flooding following Katrina's landfall, the Wisdom Building took on very little water in its basement level. The circuit's computer servers and paper records, located on the first floor about two feet above street level, were not damaged.

Chief Judge Carolyn Dineen King stated: *"The Fifth Circuit's return to New Orleans marks a welcome return to our circuit home that has served us so well. We have had 134 employees temporarily relocated from New Orleans on duty in Houston. After more than two months of rescue operations and drying out, New Orleans is on the road to recovery. The Fifth Circuit, part of the city's fabric for more than a hundred years, is proud to call New Orleans home."*

The court's first hearing following Katrina has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 18, 2006, where all of the judges of the court will conduct an *en banc* proceeding. Regular panel hearings of the court will begin in February 2006 and continue thereafter.

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